

VZCZCXRO3248
RR RUEHROV
DE RUEHNR #0006 0021449
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 021449Z JAN 08
FM AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4027
RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 9789
RUEHDR/AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM 5674
RUEHDJ/AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI 5007
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 2502
RUEHKH/AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM 1792
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 2548
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 2474
RHMFIUU/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RHMFIUU/CJTF HOA

UNCLAS NAIROBI 000006

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: KENYA ELECTIONS: GOK PRESS STATEMENT ON SUSPENSION OF LIVE BROADCASTS

The GOK issued the following press release on December 31, 2007.

Begin text:

SUSPENSION OF LIVE BROADCASTS MEANT TO STOP VIOLENCE

The Governments suspension of live broadcasts by TV and radio stations is not meant to curtail media freedom.

This is a temporary but necessary measure undertaken because media houses were being used to perpetuate violence and to incite communities against each other.

The Government wishes that media houses had an ability to delay transmission of live broadcasts for even a few seconds to allow editors' to quickly stop dangerous information from airing. Unfortunately, that capacity does not exist in Kenya. The ban is meant to empower editors to preview content emanating from members of the public and politicians before airing them. The material can be aired immediately editors are comfortable with it.

Africa has had its share of violence and even genocide arising from incitement by media stations. We cannot forget what happened in Rwanda when broadcasting stations called for communities to rise against each other. Media should not allow the prevailing emotionally charged atmosphere to degenerate to massacres. Already, some people were calling radio stations asking some communities to take up arms and attack other communities. These were aired live on air and the editors were helpless.

The Government is keen to ensure freedom of expression is protected and enhanced. But as you are aware, there are ongoing skirmishes across the country that have to be contained! and it is essential not to perpetuate them through incitement.

RUMOURS SHOULD BE IGNORED

Some of those who are inciting communities are using mobile phone short messages to circulate inciting messages as rumors aimed at hyping hatred amongst communities in order to create conflicts. Some of the messages are also meant to create an environment of fear and uncertainty. We should all disregard these messages. For example! no ODM leader has been arrested and no senior government or military officials have resigned, there are many rumours circulating especially by SMS maktAg.

DR. ALFRED N. MUTUA
PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS SECRETARY & GOVERNMENT SPOKESPERSON

End text.
RANNEBERGER